

WE CLAIM:

1. An online auction system for remotely located bidders comprising:
 - a preliminary bidding component conducted over a computer network, said preliminary bidding component simultaneously offering for auction a plurality of items for a preestablished duration of time; and
 - a dynamic real-time auction component conducted over the computer network and beginning after expiration of the preestablished duration of time following the end of the preliminary bidding component, said dynamic auction component offering for auction consecutively and individually each of the plurality of items from the preliminary auction component whereby an initial dynamic bid on each item is equivalent to a final bid for the item received during the preliminary bidding component.
2. The system of claim 1 wherein said dynamic real-time auction is conducted similar to a live auction.
3. The system of claim 1 wherein proxy bids are accepted during the preliminary auction component.
4. The system of claim 3 wherein a proxy bidder's current bid is automatically increased by a minimum increment in response to a higher bid, said automatic bid increases continuing until no further higher bids are forthcoming or until a maximum proxy bid has been reached.
5. The system of claim 1 further comprising a countdown timer displayed on a screen of each remotely located bidder during the dynamic auction component, said countdown timer used to inform each bidder of a running time remaining until the item can no longer be bid on.
6. The system of claim 5 wherein the countdown timer resets in response to a

bid being input.

7. The system of claim 1 further comprising a means for alerting bidders during the dynamic auction component that a specific item of interest is nearly ready to be offered for auction.

8. The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders is an audible alarm output by networked computers being used by bidders.

10 9. The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders is a telephone call placed to bidders.

10. The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders is an instant message transmitted to networked computers being used by bidders.

15 11. The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders is a pager alert transmitted to bidders.

20 12. The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders is an electronic mail message transmitted to bidders.

13. The system of claim 1 wherein bids in excess of a preestablished bid increment are treated as proxy bids.

25 14. The system of claim 3 wherein proxy bids by the high bidder during the preliminary bidding component are carried over to the dynamic auction component.

30 15. A method of conducting an auction over a computer network comprising: offering a preliminary bidding on items whereby a plurality of items are simultaneously offered for auction for a preestablished time period;

offering a dynamic real-time auction upon expiration of said preestablished time period whereby said items auctioned during the preliminary auction are offered for auction consecutively and individually with an initial bid equal to a final bid received during the preliminary auction.

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16. The method of claim 15 further comprising conducting the dynamic real-time auction similar to a traditional live auction.

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17. The method of claim 15 further comprising accepting proxy bids during the preliminary auction.

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18. The method of claim 17 further comprising automatically increasing a proxy bidder's current bid by a minimum amount in response to a higher bid, said automatic bid increasing continuing until no further higher bids are forthcoming or until a maximum proxy bid has been achieved.

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19. The method of claim 15 further comprising displaying a countdown timer on a screen of each remotely located bidder during the dynamic auction, said countdown timer informing each bidder of a time remaining until the item can no longer be bid on.

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20. The method of claim 17 further comprising resetting the countdown timer in response to an input bid.

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21. The method of claim 15 further comprising alerting bidders that a particular item of interest is about to be auctioned.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein alerting bidders is accomplished by an audible signal output by networked computers being used by bidders.

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23. The method of claim 21 wherein alerting bidders is accomplished by a

telephone call placed to bidders.

24. The method of claim 21 wherein alerting bidders is accomplished by an instant message transmitted to networked computers being used by bidders.

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25. The system of claim 21 wherein the means for alerting bidders is a pager alert transmitted to bidders.

10 26. The system of claim 21 wherein the means for alerting bidders is an electronic mail message transmitted to bidders.

27. The method of claim 15 further comprising treating bids in excess of a preestablished bid increment as proxy bids.

15 28. The system of claim 15 further comprising carrying over proxy bids placed during the preliminary bidding to the dynamic auction.

29. An auction conducted over a computer network comprising:

20 a first auction portion simultaneously offering a plurality of items for auction for a preestablished duration, said computers causing the display of a first auction portion status, including a current high bid and optionally showing a first auction countdown timer showing a running time until the first auction portion ends; and

25 a second real-time virtual auction portion offering the plurality of items consecutively and simultaneously for auction whereby each item offered for auction during the second auction portion has an initial established bid equal to a final bid received during the first auction portion, said computers causing the display of a status, including a current high bid and a second auction portion countdown timer showing a running time until no further bids can be input.

30. The auction of claim 29 further comprising a means for alerting interested users during the second real-time virtual auction that a specific item is close to being offered for bid.
- 5 31. The auction of claim 29 wherein the real-time virtual auction is conducted like a traditional live auction.
32. The auction of claim 29 wherein the second auction portion countdown timer resets in response to an input bid.